



ECA COMMUNICATIONS GUIDANCE: WEB, SOCIAL MEDIA, & PRESS

For recipient organizations of federal financial assistance awards to administer programs on behalf of the Bureau of Educational & Cultural Affairs (ECA), U.S. Department of State

Issued and maintained by the Public Affairs and Strategic Communications Office, ECA/PASC

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II. Welcome

This ECA Communications Guidance outlines requirements and recommendations for program communications, including branding, websites, social media, and press for recipients of ECA grants and cooperative agreements (hereafter referred to as "recipient organization(s)").

The most recently-updated version will always be hosted online at http://eca.state.gov/files/bureau/communications_guidance_for_eca_recipient_organizations.pdf.

We encourage you to reach out to your ECA program officer and/or grants office representative to learn more about ECA policies and strategic priorities, which will help your organization develop a coordinated outreach strategy to strengthen the program's identity, increase its visibility, and raise public awareness.

III. Introduction to ECA's Digital Presence

ECA's specialized websites receive more than 3 million visitors each year.

- **ECA (Eca.state.gov):** Explains the Bureau as an institution, highlights featured programs and initiatives, and offers data on the impact of ECA programs, resources for the press, and information for recipient organizations.
- **Exchanges (Exchanges.state.gov):** Highlights ECA-funded exchange programs and serves foreign and domestic audiences by being fully accessible, addressing top user questions, and featuring participant stories and rich multimedia content. Provides links directly to recipient organization program web pages and social media.
- **American English (Americanenglish.state.gov):** Offers engaging materials and resources for English teachers' professional development and for English students inside and outside the classroom. For example, the free interactive Trace Effects video game, available on this website and also by DVD, helps students learn English and explore American culture through puzzles, games, and adventures in an interactive world.
- **International Exchange Alumni (Alumni.state.gov):** Networking website that offers informational and professional resources for all past and current participants of U.S. government-sponsored exchange programs to build upon their exchange experience.
- **J-1 Visa (J1visa.state.gov):** Hosts J-1 Visa information for participants, program sponsors, host families, and employers. Rules and regulations are easily accessible and written in plain

English. A mobile-friendly, streamlined layout anticipates user needs and makes searching easier.

ECA strives to maintain current program information across our websites and to include accurate links to relevant program webpages on your non-governmental websites, sending you traffic and giving your websites more visibility by their association with the Department of State exchange program community for the successful implementation of ECA programs. Please contact your program officer if you perceive any inaccuracies or out-of-date information on ECA websites.

We encourage you to follow and interact with our social media presences. We also ask that you help us in making program participants and alumni aware of these opportunities for engagement. ECA's bureau-wide social media presences include:

- [**@ECAatState \(Bureau Twitter Account\)**](#): Focuses on public diplomacy, international exchange and education.
- [**@ECA AS \(Assistant Secretary Twitter Account\)**](#): Provides insight on the Assistant Secretary's work, updates from ECA and State Department, program promotion and highlights.
- [**U.S. Department of State Exchange Programs \(Bureau Facebook Account\)**](#): Focuses on sharing engaging program and alumni news and serves as a first stop for potential participants who are exploring multiple programs.
- [**International Exchange Alumni \(Bureau Alumni Facebook Account\)**](#): Engages alumni of U.S. government-sponsored exchange programs, providing them with access to alumni news and opportunities.
- [**Exchanges Video \(YouTube Account\)**](#): Includes all videos created by ECA and often showcases related recipient-organization videos. Includes thematic and program-specific playlists.
- [**Exchanges Photos \(Flickr Account\)**](#): Centralized repository of high-resolution ECA program and alumni images.

ECA also manages many other specialized social media properties related to its programs and initiatives, which can be viewed at each program page on <http://exchanges.state.gov>.

IV. Branding

A. Relationship with ECA

As detailed in your grant or cooperative agreement documents, in all of your program communications materials, the relationship with the U.S. Department of State, or more specifically, ECA, must be clear. All promotional materials should be developed in consultation with your ECA program officer.

When defining the program relationship with the U.S. Department of State would negatively affect the success of a program or the safety of participants, exceptions may be made. Exceptions must be approved by your ECA program officer in writing.

V. Setting Up Program Digital Outreach

A. Program Website / Webpage

Below is a summary of requirements and recommendations for websites and webpages presenting ECA program and initiatives:

Requirements

- **Clearance of Websites and Webpages:** All new webpages/websites dedicated to ECA programs, participants, or alumni of ECA programs must be cleared by ECA; content must be developed in consultation with your ECA program officer. Drafts shall be reviewed for clearance by your program officer.
- **Credit and Link to Department of State upon Introduction:** When you first introduce an ECA program on your webpage or website, you must mention the U.S. Department of State as the program sponsor in a prominent location and also include a clear link to your program page on exchanges.state.gov or eca.state.gov (e.g., <http://exchanges.state.gov/us/program/national-security-language-initiative-youth-nsli-y>). If you are unsure of which page to link to, please contact your ECA program officer.
- **Accessibility of Content:** Program webpages and/or websites maintained by ECA grant recipients must be compliant with [Section 508](#) of the Rehabilitation Act, which addresses the accessibility of content to persons with disabilities, “unless an undue burden would be imposed on the department or agency.” There is a narrow view as to what constitutes an “undue burden.” Even if there is an “undue burden,” the State Department, grantees, and partners must provide accessible alternatives for all non-accessible content that it publishes.

Recommendations

- **Credit and Link to Department of State in Footer:** On all webpages/websites dedicated to a U.S. Department of State-funded program, we encourage grant recipients to add the following in the footer of each page: “This is a program of the U.S. Department of State, administered by <name of recipient organization>.” The “program of the U.S. Department of State” portion should link directly to your program’s page on the Department site (i.e. <http://exchanges.state.gov/us/program/national-security-language-initiative-youth-nsli-y>).

- **Use of Seal:** The U.S. Department of State official seal may be prominently placed on a program webpage or website dedicated to an ECA-funded program. The official seal should link directly to <http://eca.state.gov>. The official seal may only be used with permission from your program officer on official materials such as webpages, websites, brochures, or pre-departure orientation materials and should not be obscured or altered. Please note that any materials, including webpages/websites, featuring the Department of State official seal must be cleared by your ECA program officer.
- **Mobile-Friendly:** We encourage you to consider making your website, and especially your program application materials (if applicable), mobile-friendly. Given the prevalence of mobile device use worldwide, the Department of State makes it a priority to meet the needs of audiences that access our information from mobile devices. Note that the accessibility requirements also apply to mobile applications.

B. Program Social Media Presence

ECA recognizes the value of strategically-planned and well-maintained social media presences for program and alumni outreach and for promoting the opportunity to participate in program evaluations. Recipient organizations that administer ECA programs may be granted permission on a case-by-case basis to administer a social media property on behalf of the U.S. Department of State. When you manage a social media property on behalf of a U.S. Department of State ECA program, you must work together with the Department of State to manage this property responsibly and strategically.

It is also vital to ECA that these presences be easily recognized as part of the larger Department of State exchange program family. We encourage you to think strategically and to involve ECA in conversations about potential new social media presences, and you may wish to meet with your ECA program officer and Public Affairs and Strategic Communications (PASC) Office representatives to discuss any special communications ideas or projects, such as program-related challenges or contests, that you would like to manage in coordination with or on behalf of the Department of State.

1. Social Media Requirements and Recommendations

Because the social media landscape is constantly changing, ECA will communicate updates to these guidelines to you by email when possible, and we encourage you to refer to [this document on eca.state.gov](#) for the most up-to-date guidance.

Requirements

- **Terms of Use:** Per Department of State policies and procedures (5 FAM 793.4), Department social media sites must include a Terms of Use. If the social media site is managed by an ECA employee, the Department of State Terms of Use template must be used. Email ECA_PASC@state.gov for the appropriate Terms of Use template.

- **Profile Photo:** The official ECA program logo must be used as the profile photo. If there is no program logo, you may use the Department of State seal with permission from your ECA program officer.
- **Facebook Description:** This official ECA program description must be included in the Facebook **About** section: [*Short description of program*]. [*Program Name*] is sponsored by the U.S. Department of State.
- **Twitter Description:** On **Twitter**, you must include the text “This is an @ECAatState prgm,” in the **About** section.

Recommendations

- **Provide ECA Administrative Access to ECA Program Social Media Properties:** Online communities and social media presences may exist beyond the period of your grant. ECA prefers to create and retain ownership of new social media properties and to grant administrative access to current recipient organizations for the duration of their grant period. ECA requests that current recipient organizations with existing official ECA program social media accounts provide their ECA program officers with administrative access to those accounts.
- **Expectations for Conduct as an Online Community Manager:**
 - Be responsible for posting on the social media property on a regular basis and responding to comments and queries that are posted on the website in a timely manner.
 - Be mindful of spelling errors, basic grammar, and plain language, as representatives publicly promoting U.S. Department of State-funded programs. Please use unabbreviated words and complete sentences whenever possible in social media posts.
 - Safeguard the account password: change the password at least every quarter and do not share the password with interns or other temporary employees who have not received training, unless under proper supervision.
- **Strive for Accessible Social Media Platforms:** Recipient organizations should make every effort to select social media sites that are compliant with [Section 508](#) of the Rehabilitation Act, which addresses the accessibility of content to persons with disabilities.

C. Program Videos

Video is a powerful medium that allows you to communicate your message clearly and succinctly. ECA produces entertaining, informative pieces about its programs, hosted on <http://youtube.com/exchangesvideo>. Some recipient organizations, if they have the necessary skills and resources, also choose to create ECA program videos.

Below is a summary of our video requirements and recommendations for recipient organizations:

Requirements

- **Clear Promotional Videos:** Grant recipients must clear any video products intended to widely promote ECA programs with your ECA program officer. ECA does not need to review videos produced by participants or for limited use with a certain project or cohort unless otherwise requested.
- **Video Accessibility:** Grant recipients must ensure compliance of videos with [Section 508](#) of the Rehabilitation Act, which addresses the accessibility of content to persons with disabilities.

Recommendations

- **Use of Seal in Videos:** The U.S. Department of State seal may be placed in all videos promoting U.S. Department of State programs.
- **High-Quality Video:** Shoot footage in high definition, if possible, and edit the piece to tell a compelling story.

D. Website and Social Media Analytics

ECA uses various performance-measuring analytics programs and ECA staff regularly review the performance of its websites and social media presences.

1. Adding Analytics Tracking to Website

We encourage recipient organizations to choose an analytics program to monitor visits to your websites, and all use must be consistent with applicable law. You are free to choose the service of your choice.

Most social media platforms include built-in social media statistics, which you may want to monitor for your own use.

E. Engaging with the Media

ECA encourages recipient organizations to share news and highlights about the program(s) they administer with media and stakeholders, while abiding by the following requirements and recommendations. Participants ages 18 and older are free to decide if they want to interact with media representatives, as long as it does not significantly impact the program schedule. No permission from the Department of State is necessary. For interviews with minors, consult with the program officer. Please ensure that all participants, including those over 18 years old, understand the implications of speaking with the media, and that they could have their name and photo appear in U.S. and home country media as a result, with quotes attributed to them.

Requirements

- **Press Releases & Announcements:** Any formal announcement or release to the press concerning an ECA-sponsored program must be reviewed and cleared by ECA. To submit a press release or media note for review, send it directly to the program officer. We ask that you send a draft of your press release at least one week prior the intended release date to give ECA and others in the State Department time to review and provide input. Additionally, we will recommend timing for release to maximize impact and to align with other outreach efforts.
- **Include Department of State Contact:** In releases, include contact information for your organization and for the Department of State, using eca-press@state.gov.

Recommendations

- **Obtain Participant Consent:** In order to feature an individual participant in any Department of State or recipient organization outreach or promotion (e.g., digital, print, or video), you may consider first obtaining a Participant Consent & Release Form signed by the participant or parents/guardians of those under the age of 18. If needed, your program officer will provide an electronic copy of ECA's Participant Consent & Release Form. Recipient organizations are responsible for distributing it to participants upon or before arrival and maintaining the signed copies.
- **Keep It Short:** Keep releases to three to five paragraphs in length – never go over one page.
- **Mention Sponsorship:** Mention in the first paragraph of the release that the program is sponsored by the U.S. Department of State.
- **Make Local Link:** Show a direct connection between the subject of the article, the intended audience, and the local community. Make it easy for reporters to understand why they should cover this story and why the community would care.

- **Media about a Program or Initiative:** Please notify your program officer when you receive inquiries from the media to feature a program. For media focused on a program, we want the opportunity to provide a U.S. Department of State perspective when appropriate, and also to notify any relevant State Department offices and U.S. embassies. Please provide a brief summary of the request, detailing who, what, where, and when. Requests that need an immediate response should be sent simultaneously to your ECA program officer and eca-press@state.gov.
- **Interview Follow-Up:** Immediately following any media interviews, the recipient organization should share the details of the coverage, including the likely publication or air date, with the ECA program officer via email or phone.
- **Events and Speakers:** If you are sending recipient organization staff or program participant representatives to give a presentation about an ECA-sponsored program at conferences or events, please notify your ECA program officer. We will help amplify and promote the event, when appropriate, and may provide suggestions or materials.

Communications Guidance Summary Checklist

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Web

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